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***West Virginia 2006 Small Business Person of the Year***  
***Connie Saunders***

**BLUEFIELD, W.Va.** - Connie Saunders is the type of businessperson who puts you at ease the minute you meet her. A true entrepreneur in every sense of the word, she is responsible for the development of several successful businesses. An entrepreneur who truly thinks out of the box, she isn't afraid to take chances when an opportunity arises which might improve her business. Saunders, a tireless worker dedicated to her profession, possesses a wealth of business savvy and knowledge yet never stops learning and is always willing to share her knowledge among her colleagues.

A graduate of Bluefield College with a degree in Business Administration, Saunders also attended Concord College, West Virginia University, and Bluefield State. Prior to becoming an entrepreneur, she worked for Bluefield Supply Company and as an administrative assistant for Tazewell Industries. She has also worked in the legal field and for the West Virginia Division of Mines.

Saunders began her entrepreneurial journey in 1986 with Beauty Escape, Inc. Three years later she recognized the need for personnel services and created Saunders Staffing, Inc. With her ingenuity, an initial investment of \$3,000, one employee, some office equipment and a small office in Bluefield, W.Va., she has grown into a 500 employee multi-state, multi-company venture with offices in Princeton, Bluefield, and Beckley, W.Va.

Saunders Staffing is an experienced employment contracting firm which provides permanent placement for individuals and support for organizations. The company provides placement for the following fields: clerical, sales, medical, technical, industrial and assembly service. Saunders has incorporated the assistance of her husband, Rick, and son Rick Wellsons to make it a truly family-operated business.

One of the greatest strengths of Saunders Staffing is its flexibility to meet customer's needs by listening to them and adjusting their policies and procedures accordingly. Another advantage is being a local, home-town company that knows its customer base. The Saunders' are actively involved in their community, belonging to many local organizations where Connie utilizes her talents and expertise to further causes that greatly benefit the area.

She works closely with the WV Small Business Development Center and serves as chair of the Region 1 Workforce Women's Business Center Advisory Board of Directors. As an active supporter of the Women's Business Center in Beckley, she refers numerous businesses to the Center and the SBDC to enable them to receive the technical assistance they need. Always one to give, she participates in the mentoring/networking services offered by the WBC and believes in supporting the development of nascent and existing business owners, especially women-owned businesses. Her leadership skills can be observed by the way she steps up to the plate, takes the initiative, and gets things done.

Saunders also operates Personnel Pool, a closely held sister company, based in Virginia that performs work in both Virginia and West Virginia. This expansion broadened the reach and services of the company and allowed Saunders to expand into the industrial and governmental arena. She is also president & CEO of C.S. Services, a consulting company and West Virginia Community Services for Women, Inc, a non-profit organization.

Saunders recognizes the importance of community and economic development as a whole without which her business would not be successful. She is dedicated to supporting the Bluefield area and its people, through her business and through various community organizations.

Saunders and her husband live in Bluefield, W.Va. and is the mother of three children and two grandchildren. In her spare time she enjoys music, gardening, collecting antiques and meeting people.

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